

OOLOGICAL NOTES.

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In a collection of nests and eggs made last season by our fellow-member Mr. J. A. Boyd, of the Herbert River, North-eastern Queensland, are the nests and eggs of a species of Honey-eater and the eggs of a Cuckoo, a description of which may be of interest to members of this Society. That a portion of the avifauna of the rich coastal brushes of tropical North-eastern Queensland is derived from the adjoining Papuan fauna on one hand, and that of the Indo-Malayan fauna on the other, is well exemplified by the two species that are exhibited here this evening; *Ptilotis analoga* representing the Papuan, and *Lamprococcyx malayanus* that of the Indo-Malayan areas.

PTILOTIS ANALOGA.

This Honey-eater's being subject to local variation, more especially in size and the length of the bill, will account for the different names under which each phase has been described. It was first figured by MM. Hombron et Jacquinot in the "Voyage au Pôle Sud," as *Ptilotis analogue*, and was described subsequently in the text of the same work by MM. Jacquinot et Pucheran as *Ptilotis similis*, from specimens obtained on the western coast of New Guinea. Before the text of the "Voy. au Pôle Sud" was printed, however, Reichenbach, whose name obtains as the authority for this species, had *described* and figured it in his Handbook of *Meropinae* under the name of *P. analoga*, originally bestowed on it by Hombron and Jacquinot. Since then varying phases of this species have been characterised from different parts of the same island under the names of *Ptilotis auriculata* and

Ptilotis flavirictus. From a single specimen obtained at Cape York, Gould described a decidedly smaller race with an unusually long bill as *P. gracilis*, of which there are similar specimens in the Macleayan Museum, obtained at Cardwell; and later on characterised another specimen received from Cape York, that had the undersurface of the body slightly streaked, and the ear patch well defined, as *P. notata*. It is worthy of note, however, that specimens collected by members of the Chevert Expedition at Cape York and the islands of Torres Straits, where Mr. Masters states it is common, as well as others obtained from Hall Sound and Katau in New Guinea, and by Goldie at Port Moresby, are precisely similar in colour, size, length of bill and extent of ear patch as the specimen procured on the Herbert River, its farthest southern limit yet recorded, and all of which agree with the original figure and description of *P. analoga*.

Nests of this species taken by Mr. Boyd were suspended by the rim and built in Mango trees at an height of five or six feet from the ground; they are cup-shaped structures, outwardly composed of the hair-like fibre of the Cocoanut Palm, dried skeletons of leaves, and pieces of the paper-like bark of the *Melaleuca*, the interior being beautifully lined with the downy glistening white seeds of the "Cotton Plant"; they measure exteriorly three inches and a half in diameter by two inches and a half in depth; internally, two inches and a half in diameter by two inches in depth. Eggs usually two in number for a sitting; they are ovoid in form, pure white, with small blotches, rounded spots and dots on the thicker end, varying in size, also in shade from a rich reddish-black to a purplish-brown, closely resembling small eggs of *Ptilotis lewinii*. A set taken on the 11th of September, 1893, measure (A) 0.92×0.67 inch; (B) 0.93×0.67 inch; another set taken the 30th of the following month measure (A) 0.92×0.66 inch; (B) 0.9×0.65 inch. Mr. Boyd has also from time to time supplied me with the following information respecting a nest of this species he had under close observation from the time it was started until the young ones left the nest. It was a most curious position selected, the nest being built upon the frond of a fern,

eighteen inches from the ground, growing in a fernery attached to Mr. Boyd's house, and opposite his office to which people were constantly coming through the day; a piano also, that was in frequent use by the children, being within fifteen feet of the nest. During the period of incubation the female sat steadily, and did not attempt to fly when looked at by one only three feet away, the nest being so deep that the whole of the bird's body was invisible except the bill. This bird was quite tame and used to fly backwards and forwards through the dining-room where a number of persons were seated at dinner. The nest was commenced on the 7th of December, and contained three eggs on the 15th inst.; two young ones were hatched on the 28th inst., and a third next day; the period of incubation being fourteen days. The young birds left the nest on the 12th of January.

LAMPROCOCYX MALAYANUS (LITTLE BRONZE CUCKOO).

The habitat of this species is the Malayan Peninsula, extending through the islands of the Indo-Malayan Archipelago to New Guinea, and ranging as far South as Cambridge Gulf on the North-western portion of the Australian Continent, and to the neighbourhood of Port Denison on the North-eastern coast.

Gould's figure of *Chrysococcyx minutillus*, in his Supplement to the folio edition of the Birds of Australia, is a faithful representation of this bird, but being copied from a dried skin lacks the bright vermilion orbital ring which is so marked a characteristic in this species. Captain G. E. Shelley, however, who has recently prepared the *Cuculidae* for Vol. xix. of the British Museum Catalogue of Birds, pronounces Gould's type specimen of *C. minutillus*, under which name this Cuckoo is more familiarly known in Australia, to be identical with *C. malayanus* of Raffles.

For some years past Mr. Boyd has found a dark bronze-coloured egg of a Cuckoo in the nests of *Gerygone magnirostris*, varying considerably from the well-known egg of *L. plagosus*, and which I referred to when describing the nest and eggs of *G. magnirostris* in "The Ibis" last year. Recently Mr. Boyd has forwarded two spirit specimens of the Cuckoos frequenting the vicinity of where these

bronze-coloured eggs were deposited. One is an adult male, *Lamprococcyx malayanus*; the other a young male, *Cacomantis castaneiventris*. Now, judging from analogy, one would reasonably expect to find the egg of the latter species of the same type as those of *Cacomantis flabelliformis* and *C. insperatus*, and I have little hesitation in provisionally referring the Cuckoo's eggs found in the nests of *Gerygone magnirostris* as belonging to *Lamprococcyx malayanus*, until Mr. Boyd has an opportunity of watching one of these Cuckoo's eggs hatched by the foster parent, and conclusively determining to which species the young bird belongs.

The Cuckoo's eggs taken from the nests of *Gerygone magnirostris* are elongate ovals in form and equal in size at each end, of a rich deep olivaceous bronze, some specimens having minute black dots on the larger end, and the surface of the shell smooth and glossy. Specimens taken during 1893 measure as follows:—(A) 0.78 × 0.53 inch; (B) 0.8 × 0.53 inch; (C) 0.83 × 0.55 inch; (D) 0.78 × 0.53 inch; (E) 0.82 × 0.54 inch.

In conclusion, I may here point out that eggs of a Cuckoo taken near Sydney from nests of *Rhipidura albiscapa*, *Malurus cyaneus* and *Ptilotis chrysops*, and described at different meetings of this Society by Dr. George Hurst and myself, when we both referred to them as belonging to *Cacomantis insperatus*, as it was the only other species of Cuckoo found near Sydney whose egg we were until then acquainted with, have been verified last season by finding similar eggs in the nests of *R. albiscapa*, as well as seeing in the same locality specimens of *Cacomantis insperatus*, and by obtaining a young Square-tailed Cuckoo that was being fed by the foster parents, *R. albiscapa*.

That *C. insperatus* evinces a decided preference for depositing its eggs in the nests of *Rhipidura albiscapa*, is signalled by the fact that all the eggs I know of belonging to this Cuckoo that were taken last season, both near Sydney and two hundred miles inland, were found in the nests of the White-shafted Fantail.